

Chapter 3 – Health Management

Herd health is critical to a profitable ranching operation, and no less important in producing a high-quality beef product. The best genetics are easily derailed if cattle get sick at any time in their lives. Research has repeatedly shown the dramatic impact health has on both feedlot performance and carcass merit.

These recommendations are meant as a general guide but cannot anticipate regional or individual herd health needs. Your local veterinarian should always be consulted when developing your health programs.

Whole-herd Health

Herd vaccination strategies are designed to reduce the risk of disease from common reproductive, respiratory and enteric pathogens. Vaccination will not eliminate disease risk but, when accompanied by good animal husbandry and biosecurity, it can greatly reduce risk and losses from disease.

Develop a herd health vaccination program that includes:

- ✓ IBR
- ✓ PI-3
- ✓ BVD
- ✓ BRSV
- ✓ Vibriosis
- ✓ Leptospirosis

Calving Time

The first critical point for calf health is birth, after which colostrum (first milk) prepares the immune system to ward off health challenges.

- Select to minimize calving difficulties, especially in virgin heifers. Difficult births stress both dam and calf and may reduce the amount and timeliness of nursing. Calves need colostrum within the first 12 hours to maximize antibody absorption.
- Calving ease is largely determined by birth weight and can be accurately managed using Birth Weight (BW) and Direct Calving Ease (CE) EPDs.
- Tag and record identity and sex of calves.
- Consider castration of male calves.

Scour prevention

One of the first health challenges for a calf could be scours.

- Research has developed management systems to minimize the threat by rotating to fresh pastures while calving.
- Some managers may choose to vaccinate cows prior to calving, especially in corral or drylot environments, to provide disease protection through colostrum. If the cowherd has not been vaccinated, an oral vaccine in newborns prior to nursing can provide immediate protection in the gut. A scours vaccination program should include protection against:
 - Rotavirus, coronavirus
 - K99 E. coli
 - Cl. perfringens Type C

60 to 90 Days of Age

A proper vaccination program is key to good animal health, and some programs begin at this stage.

- Consider a clostridial and IBR, PI-3, BVD and BRSV vaccine to provide some level of protection against clostridial diseases and viral infections that may predispose “summer pneumonia.”
- If not done when tagging, castration by this time is recommended.

4 to 6 Weeks Pre-weaning

A pre-weaning vaccination program allows the calf to enter into the stress of weaning with a prepared immune system.

- Use a vaccination program that includes protection from IBR, PI-3, BVD, BRSV and clostridial diseases. Vaccine labels vary for administration to nursing calves, so work with your veterinarian to develop a program that fits your operation.
- If calves will be weaned within 30 days, consider de-worming and applying controls for internal and external parasites specific to your region. Calves treated now will be parasite free at weaning.
- If not done earlier, castrate male calves to minimize stress.

Weaning

Stress compromises immune system function. Thus, every effort should be made to reduce stress at weaning time. Various management strategies, such as fence-line weaning, have been shown to minimize stress.

- All booster vaccinations should be given at weaning time. Do not booster clostridials at weaning if done previously.
- If not done at pre-weaning, de-worm and apply controls for internal and external parasites specific to your region.
- If pre-weaning vaccinations were not administered, give first round of vaccinations. Follow these with a booster 14 to 28 days later.
- A medicated starting ration may be used for at least 60 days to reduce sickness and digestive problems (bloat). Rations with an ionophore and coccidiostat are recommended.
- Calves should go through a minimum 45-day preconditioning program before shipping. This gets them through the stress of weaning, accustomed to eating from a bunk and drinking from a waterer.
















HEALTH PROGRAM TIMING RECOMMENDATIONS



	BASIC PRACTICES	BETTER PRACTICES	BEST PRACTICES
Calving	Ensure colostrum intake Tag, record identity & sex Scour prevention	Ensure colostrum intake Tag, record identity & sex Scour prevention	Ensure colostrum intake Tag, record identity & sex Scour prevention
60-90 days			1 st round-IBR/PI-3/BVD/BRSV 1 st round-Clostridials
4-6 weeks pre-weaning		1 st round-IBR/PI-3/BVD/BRSV 1 st round-Clostridials	2 nd round-IBR/PI-3/BVD/BRSV Booster-Clostridials De-worm
At weaning	1 st round-IBR/PI-3/BVD/BRSV 1 st round-Clostridials	Booster-IBR/PI-3/BVD/BRSV Booster-Clostridials De-worm	Booster-IBR/PI-3/BVD/BRSV
14-28 days post-weaning	Booster-IBR/PI-3/BVD/BRSV Booster-Clostridials		

Implant Use

Growth-promoting implants administered at or before weaning may reduce marbling levels at harvest. To maximize a calf's marbling potential, or if you are retaining ownership, implants at the suckling or backgrounding stages should be avoided. For calves on first- and second-calf heifers, or cows with reduced milk production due to limited forage, implants can be especially negative to marbling. If you are using implants, both timing and potency need to be considered.

IMPLANT TIMING CHART

Cow Description	Age of Calf				
	<60 days	60-150 days	4-6 weeks pre-weaning	Weaning time	2-3 weeks post-weaning
1 st or 2 nd calf heifer					
Cows on reduced forage					
Cows on adequate forage					

 **ACCEPTABLE**
 **NOT RECOMMENDED**

IMPLANT PRODUCTS BY POTENCY¹

Low	Moderate
Ralgro® Synovex®-C Component® E-C	Synovex®-S Ralgro® Magnum™ Compudose® Encore® Component® E-S Synovex®-H Revalor®-G Finaplix®-H Component® T-H Component® T-S Synovex®-Choice

¹Relative classification based primarily on dosage (Pritchard, 2005)

IMPLANT POTENCY CHART

Frame/Growth Genetics	Calf Average Daily Gain, lb./day			
	<1.75	1.75-2.0	2.1-2.5	>2.5
Medium/Moderate				or
Large/High				or
Low Potency Moderate Potency No Implant Recommended				